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House of Representatives

The House met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. BROOKS of Alabama).

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the Speaker:

WASHINGTON, DC,

May 15, 2013.

I hereby appoint the Honorable MO BROOKS to act as Speaker pro tempore on this day.

JOHN A. BOEHNER,

Speaker of the House of Representatives.

MORNING-HOUR DEBATE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 3, 2013, the Chair will now recognize Members from lists submitted by the majority and minority leaders for morning-hour debate.

The Chair will alternate recognition between the parties, with each party limited to 1 hour and each Member other than the majority and minority leaders and the minority whip limited to 5 minutes each, but in no event shall debate continue beyond 11:50 a.m.

SEQUESTRATION

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. HOYER) for 5 minutes.

Mr. HOYER. Mr. Speaker, this week the House will be voting for the 37th time to repeal the Affordable Care Act.

This vote comes at a time when we are facing serious and pressing challenges, one of the most important of which is the operations of the sequester. That is 37 votes to repeal the Affordable Care Act.

Let us set aside for a moment the important issue of how health reform is working and making quality care accessible and affordable for more Ameri-

cans. I'll be speaking more about that from this floor in coming days, as I know some of my colleagues will.

What I find—and I believe most Americans find—incomprehensible is how this House could waste its time on such a blatantly partisan vote when the effects of sequestration are having a growing negative effect on our economy and on the lives of so many American families. That ought to be our focus this week and every week until we find a solution, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker BOEHNER has said that this 37th repeal vote is justified because freshman Members have not had an opportunity to vote on that issue. If that is his view, then, by the same reasoning, he should allow a vote on a balanced alternative to the sequester. Freshmen have not had a chance to cast their votes on whether to replace the entire sequester with a big and balanced solution to deficits.

If the House proceeds with a vote on repealing the Affordable Care Act on the grounds that Members deserve an opportunity to be on the record on such an important issue, surely, Mr. Speaker, we also ought to have a vote on replacing the sequester, which we know is having adverse effects on our economy and on our national security.

American families and businesses are facing greater and greater uncertainty as the result of the sequester and the unwillingness on the part of Congress to take a meaningful, bipartisan action to stop it. With this uncertainty, businesses have slowed hiring and in some cases have even begun to lay off workers.

This indiscriminate and irrational nature of the sequestration means that it's ill effects will be felt across our economy and society without regard to our priorities. It also means that none of us, not one of us in this Chamber, is immune in our own districts where constituents will see a reduction in services and dislocation.

Because of the sequester, we are at risk of 70,000 young people kicked off Head Start; 10,000 teacher jobs at risk for title I cuts; 4 million fewer Meals on Wheels for seniors; 600,000 women, infants, and children dropped off the rolls; emergency unemployment insurance cut by 11 percent for 2 million out-of-work Americans; 2,100 fewer food-safety inspections. That's a drop of 18 percent to make sure that our food is safe. And one-third of combat air units are grounded.

The responsible path forward is for Democrats and Republicans to work together on a big and balanced approach to deficits that restores certainty to our businesses and families.

Four times Mr. VAN HOLLEN, the ranking member of the Budget Committee, has offered an amendment to the sequester, which would get to the same deficit reduction, but in a way that was prioritizing those things that are important in our country and eliminating those that are not, and raising some additional revenues, as well.

Not only has that not been considered, but the Republicans have refused to allow that amendment on the floor. Yet we have the 37th time to repeal the health care bill, which is already benefiting millions of Americans. It's not a responsible use of congressional time.

I urge the Speaker and the Republican leader to cancel this repeal vote and get back to business by allowing us to consider a balanced alternative to the sequester this week.

I also urge them to bring to the floor a motion to go to conference on the budget. My Republican friends pleaded for the Senate to pass a budget. The Senate passed a budget; we passed a budget. Regular order is going to conference where we could, in fact, come to an agreement on a big and balanced deal to replace this negatively impacting sequester.

There is nothing on the schedule to do that, either to repeal the sequester

□ This symbol represents the time of day during the House proceedings, e.g., □ 1407 is 2:07 p.m.

Matter set in this typeface indicates words inserted or appended, rather than spoken, by a Member of the House on the floor.



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